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INTRODUCTORY LECTURE

TO THE CLASS

OF THE

HOMŒOPATHIC MEDICAL COLLEGE

OF PENNSYLVANIA.

Delivered October 11th, 1852.

BY

WILLIAM S. HELMUTH, M.D.,

PROFESSOR OF HOMŒOPATHIC INSTITUTES, PATHOLOGY, AND THE PRACTICE
OF MEDICINE.

PUBLISHED BY THE CLASS.

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CORRESPONDENCE.

PHILADELPHIA, October 21st, 1852.

WILLIAM S. HELMUTH, M.D.:—

DEAR SIR:—At a general meeting of the Students of the Homœopathic Medical College of Pennsylvania, the undersigned were appointed a committee to solicit for publication a copy of your able and interesting Introductory Lecture of the 11th instant.

Very respectfully,

Your obedient servants,

WM. T. HELMUTH, Pennsylvania.

JOHN TURNER, Michigan.

J. A. WAKEMAN, M.D., Ohio.

I. TISDALE TALBOT, Massachusetts.

T. J. HARDY, M.D., Virginia.

EDWARD L. BOYLE, Connecticut.

CHAS. H. WALKER, New Hampshire.

JOSEPH R. BROWN, M.D., Texas.

HENRY MINTON, New York.

EDWARD W. MORETON, Maine.

GEORGE E. E. SPARHAWK, Vermont.

H. C. ANGELL, Rhode Island.

R. TITSWORTH, New Jersey.

T. S. GEIGER, Maryland.

W. FREEMAN, Georgia.

PHILADELPHIA, October 22d, 1852.

GENTLEMEN :—

I had the pleasure to receive your communication of the 21st inst., soliciting for publication a copy of my Introductory discourse.

Although the Lecture was written with no other view than its delivery before the Class, a request so polite and flattering I am unable to decline. I herewith place it at your disposal.

Respectfully and truly your friend,

WILLIAM S. HELMUTH.

To Messrs. WM. T. HELMUTH,

JOHN TURNER,

J. A. WAKEMAN,

I. TISDALE TALBOT,

T. J. HARDY, and others.

INTRODUCTORY LECTURE.

GENTLEMEN :—

Before inviting your attention to subjects immediately connected with medicine, permit me to express the gratification I experience in recognising among those now present, some who often before have occupied the places in which they are now seated, and whose return is cordially welcomed ; while a like welcome is tendered to such who, for the first time, purpose participating in the series of studies to which the present lecture is initiatory.

Another year, gentlemen, has elapsed since introductory lectures were last delivered in this Institution, during which period of time many circumstances of an important nature have transpired both in the civil and medical world. In the former the efforts of freedom on the continent of Europe still prove unsuccessful, and entire nations groan under the iron yoke of despotism ; while in the latter a similar feeling of arbitrary sway has diffused itself among a large number of the medical profession, and the success of civil rulers in inflicting upon their subjects the burdens and impositions of benighted and barbarous ages, appears to have emboldened medical men in the endeavour to compel all members of the profession to persist in subjecting the sick and suffering, to the coarse and harassing treatment of the darkest and most dreary epochs of medical art.

While all other sciences are deemed capable of improvement, and discoveries wonderful in their phenomena and practical application are witnessed, the belief seems to be entertained that practical medicine has reached its culminating point ; that improvements

or additions are neither necessary nor to be permitted, and that nothing further is required than the modification of means now in use, or the revival of those formerly known.

At the present time, to engage in the study of medicine with a view to its pursuit as a profession, is an undertaking very different in many particulars with a like intention half a century back. The student then anticipated no impediments, with the exception, perhaps, of the petty annoyances of narrow-minded or envious rivals, or the occasional interference of some all-potent nostrum, other than the inherent difficulties which might be encountered in prosecuting the study of the different branches of science necessary to be acquired. In his efforts to unravel the hidden and complicated processes of health and disease, and more especially in his trials to relieve the latter, he had the co-operation of his professional brethren, and obstruction placed in his way by fellow-practitioners while in the pursuit of these objects, would have been regarded as a departure from that honourable line of conduct by which all physicians profess to be governed.

But from the instant a student now commences his labours, he becomes a party in a fierce strife which universally prevails, extending itself even beyond the pale of the profession. Those individuals with whom he differs in his theoretical and practical views, and whose education, social and official station, warranted the expectation of propriety and dignity of conduct, in misrepresentation and abuse descend to a level with those in the coarse and vulgar spheres of life. Reproachful epithets are liberally applied for such dissenting opinions upon gentlemen in every particular, and in some cases even more than equal to those by whom they are bestowed, and who are alike competent to form correct views, and who hold in contempt quackery however disguised, or in whatever form presented.

The inquiry then very naturally is made, what is the exciting cause of so much contention, scurrility, and vindictiveness? Is it the introduction into practice by audacious charlatans, of medicines of such deleterious quality that their use endangers the health and lives of the community? or is it some pretended *Elixir vitæ* or panacea of such potent efficacy that the shops of the drug vendors must close, and the prescriptions of physicians be no longer re-

quired? No, in neither of these direful evils will the cause be detected. The firebrand of discord is found in that word so often uttered—Homœopathy.

A word adopted by the illustrious Hahnemann. The doctrine it was his object to teach, was so diametrically opposite to prevailing medical systems as to compel him to the use of some distinguishing appellation. In the utterance of his ideas, there is always manifest that precision in the selection of individual words, and in his phraseology that vigour of expression which are so often the characteristics of powerful intellect. Necessity, therefore, and not choice, forced its adoption. A like necessity existed to distinguish those of a contrary belief, and hence the origin of the term Allopathy. These Shibboleths, though always invidious, are often unavoidable, and those of the least offensive kind should, if possible, be chosen. To distinguish physicians, therefore, by the name of some particular medicine which strongly commending itself for approval is frequently prescribed, a practice which now is getting somewhat into vogue, is to be deprecated, as for example, to designate an individual as the castor oil doctor, the spiced rhubarb doctor, the calomel doctor. The celebrated Zimmerman, in consequence of his partiality for the *Taraxacum*, was styled the Knight of the Dandelion. When the Homœopathic doctrine becomes universal, the words Homœopath and Allopath will have been forgotten. Until the arrival of which period, in their stead it is suggested that those physicians styled Homœopaths or Homœopathists be known as practitioners of *medicine*, and Allopaths or Allopathists as practitioners of *physic*.

The inquiry again recurs, what is Homœopathy, which has thrown not only the medical world but society at large in a state of ferment? It is replied that, the term has reference to a law which is expressed in the three words, "*similia similibus curantur*:" Or that the symptoms which medicinal agencies produce in healthy individuals when they correspond to the symptoms exhibited in disease are capable of curing such disease. That this fundamental proposition is true, has been and still continues to be tested by experiments twice ten thousand times repeated. It was not an hypothetical enunciation concocted in the mysterious laboratory of the student's mind, and whose birth was ushered in by the lurid gleams

of the midnight lamp. But it was the accidental discovery of a profound and sagacious philosopher while engaged in a course of experiment, the object of which was to ascertain the effects of drugs upon the healthy organism. As the fall of the apple conveyed to the mind of Newton the great law by which phenomena before unintelligible could be explained, so the physiological effects of Peruvian bark revealed to the mind of Hahnemann the general law of cure by which disease was to be encountered. In this discovery Medicine came into possession of the great object for which she had been striving for more than twenty centuries, and the pursuit of which gave origin to numerous hypotheses.

A departure from a state of health has ever prompted medical men to inquire into the causes and nature of such deviation. Thence arose the idea that disease was owing to a morbid agent having been introduced into the system, either through the stomach or lungs, and that some one or other of the humours of the body flowed in increased quantities to the affected parts in order to expel it. That as health was dependent upon an equilibrium of the humours of the body, an unusual quantity or local excess of any, either of bile, blood, or phlegm, occasioned morbid disturbance. This idea embraces the once famed doctrine of humoralism.

By others it was supposed that disease depended upon an acid or alkaline condition of the blood. These hypotheses, which located disease in the fluids, were succeeded by others, which determined the seat of morbid action to be in the solids. Both these notions received a mortal blow by the doctrine of Brown, who asserted, that "Health and disease are the same state depending on the same cause, that is, excitement, varying only in degree." Or as another writer says (Chaussier), "The alteration of the vital forces constitutes the genera and species of all diseases, of which all the differences consist essentially in the degree, the nature, and the seat of this alteration." These and other doctrines took a wide range from spiritual life to the coarsest chemical and mechanical explanations.

When hypotheses were framed, especially, by practical physicians, it may have been that they were somewhat influenced in their construction by the known actions and supposed qualities of medicinal agents. As in composition, words are suggestive of

The effluvia idea seems in extreme quarters
prevailing which are given out for the patient

ideas; or, as in the conceptions of great musical composers the expression of certain circumstances or thoughts is intended to be signified by particular sounds.

It was known, for example, that some medicines acted upon the bowels, and that the nature of the secretions altered under different circumstances. That others acted upon the kidneys, and that the nature of the urinary secretion also varied. These and other effects of the articles of the *materia medica* suggested the idea of depraved humours, and led in the construction of the earlier pathologies to their investment with such attributes as coincided with the observed effects of the medicines as were at the time in use. Whether this supposition be well founded or not, it need create no surprise that hypotheses for the most part crude and chimerical, should have received general credence and the assent of individuals whose knowledge in their day was comparatively equal to that of scientific men of any other age, when at the present boastful era of rational medicine, such a jumble of truth and error, doctrinal as well as practical, a fragmentary compound of different doctrines which at different periods extensively prevailed, is uttered and forms so great a part of the rule of practice.

With what gravity of manner does the learned leech of to-day explain to his patient that the sallow complexion, languid feelings, furred tongue, impaired appetite, and most especially the bitter taste, are evidences of a bilious condition, requiring blue mass or some other mercurial preparation, to be followed up in three hours or on the following morning with castor oil or senna decoction! Or expound to another patient, pallid and feeble, who listens with an attention almost reverential to the words of wisdom which tell the nature of her disease to be a too watery condition of the blood, and that a return to health depends upon supplying that fluid with a greater number of blood disks, for the manufacture of which, iron in some form or other is to be freely taken. The use of which will again bring back the rose-leaves to those cheeks from which they had so silently fallen. In these examples we have humoralism and chemico-humoralism. The adoption of either as a rule of practice, readily explains the injury which so frequently ensues.

The long-received doctrines of the *modus operandi* of disease,

and the therapeutical action of medicinal agents, are conjectural. The fallacy of both being evinced in the abandonment from time to time of hypothesis after hypothesis, and the very frequent disappointment experienced in anticipated therapeutical effects. Cabanis, with all the ingenuity of a shrewd intellect, with vast rhetorical powers and much literary and scientific possession, has, in a work entitled, "The Certainty of Medicine," signally failed in proving his position.

From the fact of allopathic medicine appealing so often to antiquity in support of its pretensions, to those unacquainted with medicine, it might be imagined, that centuries back it had been a great truth, upon which truth upon truth has since been accumulating, until it acquired a strength invulnerable. Or that like a crystal, century after century had added increment upon increment, each addition enabling it to reflect and refract rays of greater beauty and brilliancy, till as light upon vegetable life restoring the pale and feeble plant to animation and health, its rays produced a like salutary influence upon man. But, alas! such a conclusion were erroneous. Crystals were picked up; nuclei were found, but instead of being allowed to grow, and the laws of their increase carefully observed, and their phenomena made conducive to practical results, they were carried, either to the workshop of the mechanical philosopher and there bruised and crushed till their distinctive characters could no longer be recognised, or they were dissipated in the laboratory of the chemist; sunk in the turbid waters of humoralism, or buried in the thick mire of solidism.

The law of *simile* being an eternal and immutable law of nature renders all future hypothesis unnecessary, and there only remains to physicians a full comprehension of its requirements, and an un-deviating adherence to the details of its application. The law distinctly comprehends the idea that medicines cure diseases whose symptoms resemble not only in character but in kind, the symptoms which such medicines produce in the healthy body. Now the word kind introduced into this definition is often either omitted altogether, or when present does not receive that thoughtful attention which its importance deserves. It meets an objection which perhaps more than any other has weight with gentlemen of nobleness and truthfulness of mind, who are unable to comprehend the breadth

Is it not possible that the
man. effort to centralize the knowledge
our own organs. we are missing an opportunity to
generalize it and advance the general profession

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and depth of the law. Or who, if they attach to it any importance, discover in it nothing more than a mere rule of practice. Even the distinguished Hufeland took such a superficial view, and we often hear that Homœopathy relieves symptoms only, but does not cure disease. It is manifest, however, wherein the difficulty lies. Medical men are trained and indoctrinated into certain principles, which, though erroneous, are plausible, and which are supported by analogies and experiments, ingenious certainly and imperfect, yet sufficiently satisfactory to receive more than a partial acquiescence.

The nature of allopathic medicine, both theoretical and practical, is such as absolutely to require explanations of all the phenomena of disease. The mind of the physician is entangled in a web of hypothesis, from which he cannot extricate it. Though not only the foundation but the superstructure of the system be conjectural, these conjectures must be his guides in practice, for without them he is unable to prescribe in what he considers either a rational or scientific manner. His therapeutics rest entirely upon a theory of disease. A theory of cure stated as a simple proposition he is unable to comprehend. He cannot understand, in the abstract, how an individual ignorant of the laws of natural philosophy can propel a boat, or see the prismatic colours of the rainbow in the watery particles of the atmosphere without a knowledge of the laws of optics, or the sparkle of the diamond without knowing the gem to be crystallized carbon.

But a law or principle may be understood in the abstract. Its applications may embarrass and perplex, not from any imperfection or want of simplicity in the principle itself, but from man's incapacity. Its *modus operandi* may be inexplicable, but inquiries and researches into all circumstances and objects connected with its operations should diligently be made with a view to derive the greatest amount of good.

Hence, for the most successful employment of the law of *simile*, Pathology, in the broadest acceptation of the term, must be sedulously studied. Without this knowledge, medicine is reduced to the level of a mechanical art, and the physician to a superficial prescriber for symptoms. By the introduction of the word kind into the definition of the law of *simile*, all pathological alterations,

The correction of dis. in its description
directing or limiting extensive pathology
is a distinct place of Home in practical medicine
By an early day of the 12th of Nov. 1844

together with anatomical lesions or organic changes, are obviously included. These latter, by allopathic medicine, are in very many cases regarded as the disease, and the chief efforts are made for their removal. In the consideration of anatomical changes there is a complicated question of cause and effect, which carries with it much perplexity. As the law of *simile*, however, includes all things and circumstances connected with practical medicine, these morbid alterations necessarily come within its scope. By it, all signs, symptoms, and changes have their proper places designated, their comparative importance ascertained, and the means for their removal provided.

Hahnemann is so full and lucid upon this very point, that it is difficult to conceive how he can be misunderstood. He says, "There is no curable malady, nor any invisible morbid change in the interior of man which admits of cure, that is not made known by symptoms or morbid indications to the physician of accurate observation." Certainly, whatever be the disease, either in kind or character, in the disappearance of all the symptoms which were its exponents, sufficient evidence is afforded of the restoration of the affected parts to a normal condition.

To rely upon the existence of morbid alterations of structure as the sole or principal cause of disease, and to treat such imagined or really existing conditions upon general principles, as is done by systems of practice not Homoeopathic, has within the last century been a most prolific cause of melancholy result. That in themselves they are insufficient causes or an unsafe basis, is proved by the fact that in very many instances in which disease was supposed to consist in such morbid change, upon examination no such alteration was detected.

The truth of this assertion is forcibly corroborated by the testimony of the indefatigable Andral, whose Herculean labours in the field of autopsy are probably without parallel. Instead of such a quicksand foundation upon which to build a method of cure, the law of *simile*, relying upon its detailed observation of, and investigations into symptoms, and its means for their removal, rests upon a solid foundation, and speedily and surely accomplishes its objects. Yet while morbid changes of structure are not to be relied upon as sufficient data in themselves, for even a rational method of treat-

ment, there must be attached to them, so far as they can be ascertained, their full importance, though in connexion with other signs, symptoms, and circumstances.

To make himself still more clearly understood, Hahnemann again says, "The cure which is effected by the annihilation of the symptoms of a disease, removes at the same time the internal change upon which the disease is founded, that is to say, destroys it in its totality. It is accordingly clear that the physician has nothing more to do than to destroy the totality of the symptoms, in order to effect a simultaneous removal of the internal change, that is to say, annihilate the disease itself." What can be more lucid and complete? the internal change of course may be either functional or structural. He says further: "It is not possible to conceive or prove by any experience after the cure of the whole of the symptoms of a disease, together with all its perceptible changes, that there remains, or possibly can remain, any other than a healthy state, or that the morbid alteration which had taken place in the interior of the economy has not been annihilated."

If cavillers at this doctrine view it as imperfect, and not sufficient to accomplish all the purposes of the physician, then we are unable to discover in what the deficiency consists. It surely will not be contended that disease can exist without any evidence, even the most trifling, of its presence. The expression of pain, the development of inflammation or fever, certainly are not the only language of abnormal action. What would the physician be called upon to treat, unless symptoms of some kind, either objective or subjective, active or passive, slightly manifest or scarcely recognised, exhibited themselves. For, as Hahnemann truly observes, "We can discover nothing to remove in disease, in order to change it into health, except the *ensemble* of the symptoms."

Much as we may desire to comprehend those actions which are productive of morbid change, and industriously as we should strive to obtain such knowledge, fortunately for mankind it is not absolutely essential. The want of it does not prevent a selection of curative means. Had such knowledge been a prerequisite for successful treatment, how has disease ever been cured? Select inflammation, one of the most familiar examples of an abnormal condition, and what certainty has been reached as to its true character? The

The great difficulty met with is the fact that this must and can be understood and brought into practical application by careful study towards the clarification and interdependence of symptoms

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The most ancient opinion was, that it consisted of an accumulation of blood in parts in which, in health, none was contained. Some pathologists regarded it as a local increase, others a local decrease of vital action. Others a diminished action, with contraction of the vessels. Others as an arterial spasm only. Broussais supposed all diseases to be of an inflammatory nature. These are a very few only of the many conflicting and contradictory opinions of a condition which so frequently presents itself to the observation of medical men, and in respect to which even at the present time, uniformity of opinion is not entertained as to its real nature.

If, therefore, practical allopathic medicine assume that successful practice can be based only upon certainty in pathology, it may be questioned whether it has yet laid the first stone of the edifice. The law of *simile*, on the contrary, as has been already observed, necessarily absorbs within itself a complete knowledge of every pathological condition, and though physicians may never be able to understand them truly, or even in a satisfactory manner, it plainly directs the method for their removal. Men knew how to breathe, and that the atmosphere was necessary to respiration before it was analyzed.

Symptoms, it is true, vary in degree and character, and therefore for their removal may not be properly appreciated. They may be barely perceptible, or very obscure. But these and a multitude of other circumstances cannot render their reality questionable, nor lessen the necessity for their closer investigation. The amount of suffering neither indicates the quantum of disease, nor the degree of danger. Neuralgias, the most agonizing of ailments, are generally unattended by serious results; while disease which eventuates into malignancy may progress with slight local or constitutional disturbance.

The endeavour to invalidate the Homœopathic law comes awkwardly from those who are so constantly compelled to abandon professed principles, and have recourse either to empirical practice or specifics. The employment of the latter plainly discloses the fallacy of those tenets which avowedly are their rule of practice. Had physicians, instead of quarrelling with specifics, because their action conflicted with medical doctrines, and exposed their fallacy, endeavoured to ascertain the law by which they were regulated,

*Q. 2. Is the age of law. of substance
for the efficient working-out of great problems*

practical medicine might long since have had some reason to boast of improvement. A knowledge of the law of *simile* reconciles all discrepancies, and explains how every cure effected through the instrumentality of drugs comes within the precincts of the law, and that successful allopathy is the workings of the law with coarse and dangerous tools by blindfolded workmen.

The law being understood, and the means wherewith to apply it known, the use of these means in a skilful and efficient manner requires an amount of study, industry, and acquirement, which permits no respite nor perceives no limit. In the management of the many cases of grave and obscure disease which the physician is called upon to treat, great difficulty is often experienced. A proper estimate of these cases involves a consideration of the causes of disease, all of which are embraced under the head of Etiology; and their symptoms, to which study the term Semeiotics or Semeiology is given.

In Etiology we have predisposing, exciting, and the vexed question of proximate causes, which latter are a connecting link between Etiology and Semeiology. To appreciate the precise actions of the numerous and various causes of disease, an extensive range of thought must be put in requisition. Although something positive is ascertained upon this subject, much more remains to be discovered. Different causes often produce effects apparently similar, while like causes produce many different effects. An error in diet may provoke apoplexy, diarrhoea, dysentery, or some one or other of the host of gastric disorders. The law of *simile* requires that each case be carefully studied with reference to the cause, inasmuch as no two cases are in each particular alike, thereby contrasting strongly with the superficial method of other systems, which groups a number of cases together, and treats them all precisely in the same manner. Not only do the various causes by themselves occasion certain effects, but these latter are modified by the condition and other circumstances of those upon whom they exert their influence, such as a state of prostration from fatigue; while suffering from mental or physical excitement; when sleeping; the season of the year, and the thousand contingencies to which mankind is liable.

The study of symptoms together with Etiology, includes their

will contribute further to corroborate the truth of the law of "*similia similibus curantur*."

In the few imperfect observations which have been made upon the subject of symptoms, the endeavour has been to show that their comprehensive and profound study embodies all that relates to disease, and that this declaration does not include only what is now known or imagined to be known, but anticipates all that will hereafter be known. A complete doctrine of symptoms when in juxtaposition with the therapeutical law of *simile* constitutes a perfect science.

Those gentlemen who practice in accordance with this law, have frequent opportunity to witness, by comparison, its truth. Without any boastful intention, every such practitioner may relate cases of cure which he has effected. A boy coming hastily down stairs, fell, and struck the back of his neck; the stricken part soon became stiff and painful. The diagnosis, by a very eminent surgeon, in consultation with a gentleman equally celebrated in another department of medicine was, spinal irritation; probably an injury of the bone. The boy was placed upon his back, scarified, cupped, and blistered. Croton oil was liberally applied to the entire spinal region. For more than two years this treatment at intervals was repeated. At the commencement of the third year the symptoms not having been removed, a repetition of the same means was advised. Fortunately for the boy, the advice was not followed. The correct diagnosis was an injury of the spinal ligaments. The cause of the symptoms, their seat, character, together with the kind of tissue affected, all pointed to *Rhus Toxicodendron*. In four weeks a few doses of that medicine of the seventh attenuation, repeated occasionally, effected a cure.

Having already occupied nearly the whole time allotted to an introductory discourse, I am unable even to glance at the hiatus which the law of *simile* has filled in the introduction of moral symptoms as an essential component of every case of disease. The entire disregard of such symptoms, unless they are so strongly developed as to command attention in a separate form, in itself bears palpable testimony to the imperfection of prevalent systems of medicine. While in the Homœopathic law they are regarded

equally with others, and indeed often take prominent rank, is another fact in evidence of its truth.

The physiological provings of medicines have made extraordinary disclosures. Symptoms have been elicited corresponding with those which under certain circumstances harassed and disturbed the sick; and which had been either unnoticed, disregarded, or absurdly attributed to what can never occur in the human organism, accident. The drawing on of a pair of boots; the act of shaving; the position of the arms while sleeping; the incidents and scenery of a dream; playing a tune upon the piano; or listening to the solemn strains of the stately organ, may either produce or aggravate symptoms which direct to the successful treatment of vexatious and annoying complaints, which had baffled the combined skill of the most learned conclaves.

It is full time that these minutiae of symptoms were understood, and their importance appreciated by medical men. It is full time to know that the sneer of contempt or the smile of incredulity are not the expressions of knowledge. That it is far easier to laugh than to observe, think, and learn. It is full time for the world to know that by the discovery of a great natural law, and in its application, medicine, from a torturing and melancholy fiction, has become a refined and scientific truth.

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